
CHAPTER 3

Lesson Planning

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“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?” asked Alice.
“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cheshire Cat.

Lewis Carroll (1963). *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (p. 59). New York: Macmillan.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers may wonder “which way they ought to go” before they enter a classroom. This usually means that teachers need to plan what they want to do in their classrooms. Most teachers engage in yearly, term, unit, weekly, and daily lesson planning (Yinger, 1980). Yearly and term planning usually involve listing the objectives for a particular program. A unit plan is a series of related lessons around a specific theme such as “The Family.” Planning daily lessons is the end result of a complex planning process that includes the yearly, term, and unit plans. A daily lesson plan is a written description of how students will move toward attaining specific objectives. It describes the teaching behavior that will result in student learning.

This chapter addresses the daily planning decisions that English language teachers make before they enter the classroom. Included in this discussion are the interactive and evaluative decisions teachers make during and after the lesson. Richards (1998) stresses the importance of lesson planning for English language teachers: “The success with which a teacher conducts a lesson is often thought to depend on the effectiveness with which the lesson was planned” (p. 103). For the purposes of this chapter, lesson planning is defined as the daily decisions a teacher makes for the successful outcome of a lesson. This chapter discusses the following issues associated with lesson planning:

- Why plan?
- Models of lesson planning.
- How to plan a lesson.

WHY PLAN?

Language teachers may ask themselves why should they bother writing plans for every lesson. Some teachers write down elaborate daily plans; others do the planning inside their heads. Preservice teachers say they write daily lesson plans only because a supervisor, cooperating teacher, or school administrator requires them to do so. After they graduate, many teachers give up writing lesson plans. However, not many teachers enter a classroom without some kind of plan. Lesson plans are systematic records of a teacher's thoughts about what will be covered during a lesson. Richards (1998) suggests that lesson plans help the teacher think about the lesson in advance to "resolve problems and difficulties, to provide a structure for a lesson, to provide a 'map' for the teacher to follow, and to provide a record of what has been taught" (p. 103).

There are also internal and external reasons for planning lessons (McCutcheon, 1980). Teachers plan for internal reasons in order to feel more confident, to learn the subject matter better, to enable lessons to run more smoothly, and to anticipate problems before they happen. Teachers plan for external reasons in order to satisfy the expectations of the principal or supervisor and to guide a substitute teacher in case the class needs one. Lesson planning is especially important for preservice teachers because they may feel more of a need to be in control before the lesson begins.

Daily lesson planning can benefit English teachers in the following ways:

- A plan can help the teacher think about content, materials, sequencing, timing, and activities.
- A plan provides security (in the form of a map) in the sometimes unpredictable atmosphere of a classroom.
- A plan is a log of what has been taught.
- A plan can help a substitute to smoothly take over a class when the teacher cannot teach. (Purgason, 1991)

Daily planning of lessons also benefits students because it takes into account the different backgrounds, interests, learning styles, and abilities of the students in one class.

MODELS OF LESSON PLANNING

There are a number of approaches to lesson planning. The dominant model of lesson planning is Tyler's (1949) rational-linear framework. Tyler's model has four steps that run sequentially: (1) specify objectives; (2) select learning activities; (3) organize learning activities; and (4) specify methods of evaluation. Tyler's model is still used widely in spite of evidence that suggests that teachers rarely follow the sequential, linear process outlined in the steps (Borko & Niles, 1987). For example, Taylor (1970) studied what teachers actually did when they planned their lessons and found that they focused mostly on the interests and needs of their students. More important, he found that teachers were not well prepared in teacher-education programs for lesson planning.

In response to these findings, Yinger (1980) developed an alternative model in which planning takes place in stages. The first stage consists of "problem conception" in which planning starts with a discovery cycle of the integration of the teacher's goals, knowledge, and experience. The second stage sees the problem formulated and a solution achieved. The third stage involves implementing the plan along with its evaluation. Yinger sees this process as becoming routine, whereby each planning event is influenced by what went on before and what may happen in the future. He also sees a place for considering each teacher's experiences as influencing this ongoing process of planning.

Research on what English language teachers actually do when planning lessons has shown that many teachers, when they do write lesson plans (Richards & Lockhart, 1994), tend to deviate from the original plan. Also, when English language teachers do write daily lesson plans, they do not state them in terms of behavioral objectives, even though they are taught this method in preservice teacher education courses (Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Freeman, 1996; Bailey, 1996). Instead, English language teachers, especially more experienced teachers, are more likely to plan their lessons as sequences of activities (Freeman, 1996), teaching routines, or to focus on the need of particular students (Richards & Lockhart, 1994).

Bailey's (1996, p. 38) study of six experienced English language teachers came up with the following interesting reasons (stated as principles) why teachers deviate from the original lesson plan: (1) "Serve the common good." Here teachers are willing to deviate from the original lesson plan because one student raised an issue that the teacher perceives to be relevant for the other students. (2) "Teach to the moment." Sometimes, teachers may completely abandon the lesson plan to discuss some unplanned event because the teacher thinks it is timely for the class. (3) "Further the lesson." Teachers make a procedural change during the lesson as a means of promoting the progress of the lesson. (4) "Accommodate students' learning styles." Teachers may sometimes depart from their lesson plans in order to accommodate their students' learning styles if the original plan has not accounted for them. (5) "Promote students' involvement." Teachers sometimes eliminate some steps in their lesson plans in order to have more student involvement, especially if the students are not responding. (6) "Distribute the wealth." This last principle has teachers changing lesson plans to encourage quiet students to participate more and to keep the more active students from dominating the class time. These findings show that teacher decision making is a dynamic process involving teachers making choices before, during, and after each lesson.

The question that arises out of these studies is, What kinds of lesson plans should English language teachers write? The next section discusses how to develop, implement, and evaluate a lesson plan.

HOW TO PLAN A LESSON

DEVELOPING THE PLAN

An effective lesson plan starts with appropriate and clearly written objectives. An objective is a description of a learning outcome. Objectives describe the destination (not the journey) we want our students to reach. Clear, well-written objectives are the first step in daily lesson planning. These objectives help state precisely what we want our students to learn, help guide the selection of appropriate activities, and help provide overall lesson focus and direction. They also give teachers a way to evaluate what their students have learned at the end of the lesson. Clearly written objectives can also be used to focus the students (they know what is expected from them).

For English language lessons, Shrum and Glisan (1994) point out that effective objectives "describe what students will be able to do in terms of observable behavior and when using the foreign language" (p. 48). Hence, the language a teacher uses for stating objectives is important. I suggest action verbs be used to identify desired student behavior; these can include action verbs similar to those used in Bloom's *Taxonomy of Thinking Processes* (see Appendix B). Vague verbs such as *understand*, *appreciate*, *enjoy* (although these can still be used for certain types of lessons, e.g., English poetry or reading novels), or *learn* should be avoided because they are difficult to quantify. Action verbs such as *identify*, *present*,

Lesson Phase	Role of Teacher	Role of Students
I. <i>Perspective</i> (opening)	Asks what students have learned in previous lesson Previews new lesson	Tell what they've learned previously Respond to preview
II. <i>Stimulation</i>	Prepares students for new activity Presents attention grabber	Relate activity to their lives Respond to attention grabber
III. <i>Instruction/Participation</i>	Presents activity Checks for understanding Encourages involvement	Do activity Show understanding Interact with others
IV. <i>Closure</i>	Asks what students have learned Previews future lessons	Tell what they have learned Give input on future lessons
V. <i>Follow-up</i>	Presents other activities to reinforce same concepts Presents opportunities for interaction	Do new activities Interact with others

Adapted from Shrum & Glisan (1994)

Figure 1 Generic Components of a Lesson Plan.

describe, explain, demonstrate, list, contrast, and debate are clearer and easier for teachers to design a lesson around. Use of these action verbs also makes it easier for the students to understand what will be expected from them in each lesson.

After writing the lesson objectives, teachers must decide the activities and procedures they will use to ensure the successful attainment of these objectives. Planning at this stage means thinking through the purposes and structures of the activities. This step involves planning the shape of the lesson. To highlight some generic components of a language lesson plan, I use Shrum and Glisan's (1994) adaptation of the Hunter and Russell (1977) model (Figure 1). They have built in a place for greater student involvement in the lesson.

The generic lesson plan as shown in Figure 1 has five phases:

- I. *Perspective or opening.* The teacher asks the students (or himself or herself) the following questions: What was the previous activity (what was previously learned)? What concepts have they learned? The teacher then gives a preview of the new lesson.
- II. *Stimulation.* The teacher (a) poses a question to get the students thinking about the coming activity; (b) helps the students to relate the activity to their lives; (c) begins with an attention grabber: an anecdote, a little scene acted out by peer teachers or lay assistants, a picture, or a song; and (d) uses it (the response to the attention grabber) as a lead into the activity.
- III. *Instruction/participation.* The teacher presents the activity, checks for student understanding, and encourages active student involvement. Teachers can get students to interact by the use of pair work and/or group work.
- IV. *Closure.* For this phase the teacher checks what the students have learned by asking questions such as "What did you learn?" and "How did you feel about these activities?" The teacher then gives a preview about the possibilities for future lessons.
- V. *Follow-up.* The last phase of the lesson has the teacher using other activities to reinforce some concepts and even to introduce some new ones. The teacher gives the students

opportunities to do independent work and can set certain activities or tasks taken from the lesson as homework.

Of course, teachers can have variations on this generic model. Shrum and Glisan (1994) point out that as time passes in language lessons and as students gain competence, the students “can gradually take on a larger role in choosing the content and even in the structure of the lessons themselves” (pp. 187–188). English language teachers should also realize that language lessons may be different from other content lessons because the same concepts may need to be reinforced time and again using different methods. The following questions may be useful for language teachers to answer before planning their lessons:

- What do you want the students to learn and why?
- Are all the tasks necessary – worth doing and at the right level?
- What materials, aids, and so on, will you use and why?
- What type of interaction will you encourage – pair work or group work – and why?
- What instructions will you have to give and how will you give them (written, oral, etc.)? What questions will you ask?
- How will you monitor student understanding during the different stages of the lesson?

An example of an authentic lesson plan for an English reading class is given in Appendix A. The lesson plan should not be seen as a prescription or “how to,” because each teaching context will be different. After writing the plan, the next step is to implement it by teaching the class.

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Implementing the lesson plan is the most important (and difficult) phase of the daily lesson planning cycle. In this phase, the lesson plan itself will retreat into the background as the reality of the class takes over. As many experienced teachers know, it is easy to get sidetracked by unplanned events. However, teachers should remember that the original plan was designed with specific intentions in mind and the plan was based on the teacher’s diagnosis of the learning competence of the students. Nonetheless, teachers may need to make certain adjustments to the lesson at the implementation phase. I would suggest two broad reasons for teachers to deviate from their original lesson plan: first, when the lesson is obviously going badly and the plan is not helping to produce the desired outcome; second, when something happens during an early part of the lesson that necessitates improvisation.

When the lesson is not succeeding, teachers should make immediate adjustments to the original plan. This is difficult for beginning teachers because they may not have the necessary experience to recognize that things are going badly. They may also lack sufficient knowledge to develop contingency plans to substitute in such cases. No teacher’s guide can anticipate what problems might occur during a lesson (e.g., out-of-class problems such as interruptions from a visitor); however, they must be dealt with quickly. Teachers can build up this professional knowledge with experience.

When implementing their lesson plan, teachers might try to monitor two important issues, namely, lesson variety and lesson pacing. Variety in lesson delivery and choice of activity will keep the class lively and interested. To vary a lesson, teachers should frequently change the tempo of activities from fast-moving to slow. They can also change the class organization by giving individual tasks, pair work, group work, or full class interaction.

Activities should also vary in level of difficulty, some easy and others more demanding. The activities should also be of interest to the students, not just to the teacher. Ur (1996, p. 216), however, cautions that varied activities should not be “flung together in random order.” The result of this would be restlessness and disorder. Consequently, Ur (1996) suggests that the harder activities and tasks be placed earlier in the lesson and the quieter activities before lively ones. Teachers may want to try variations of this to see what works best in their particular class.

Pace is linked to the speed at which a lesson progresses, as well as to lesson timing. In order for teachers to develop a sense of pace, Brown (1994) suggests the following guidelines: (1) activities should not be too long or too short; (2) various techniques for delivering the activities should “flow” together; (3) there should be clear transitions between each activity. If teachers remember to work for the benefit of their students rather than their own, then they can avoid falling into the trap of racing through different activities just because they have been written on the lesson plan.

EVALUATING THE PLAN

The final part of daily lesson planning happens after the lesson has ended (although Brown [1994] reminds us that evaluation can take place during the lesson too), when the teacher must evaluate the success (or failure) of the lesson. Ur (1996) says it is important to think after teaching a lesson and ask “whether it was a good one or not, and why” (p. 219). This form of reflection, she says, is for self-development. Of course, both “success” and “failure” are relative terms and their definitions will vary according to each individual teacher’s and student’s perspective. Nevertheless, Brown (1994) says that without an evaluative component in the lesson, the teacher has no way of assessing the success of the students or what adjustments to make for the next lesson.

Brown (1994) defines evaluation in lesson planning as an assessment that is “formal or informal, that you make after students have sufficient opportunities for learning” (p. 398). Ur (1996) says that when evaluating a lesson, the first and most important criterion is student learning because that is why we have a lesson in the first place. Even though it may be difficult to judge how much has been learned in a lesson, Ur says that we can still make a good guess. This guess can be based “on our knowledge of the class, the type of activity they were engaged in, and some informal test activities that give feedback on learning” (p. 220). Ur offers the following criteria for evaluating lesson effectiveness and orders them as follows: (1) the class seemed to be learning the material well; (2) the learners were engaging with the foreign language throughout; (3) the learners were attentive all the time; (4) the learners enjoyed the lesson and were motivated; (5) the learners were active all the time; (6) the lesson went according to plan; (7) the language was used communicatively throughout (p. 220). Readers might wish to reflect on these criteria and reorder them in their own list of priority.

The following questions may also be useful for teachers to reflect on after conducting a lesson (answers can be used as a basis for future lesson planning):

- What do you think the students actually learned?
- What tasks were most successful? Least successful? Why?
- Did you finish the lesson on time?
- What changes (if any) will you make in your teaching and why (or why not)?

Additionally, for further clarification of the success of a lesson, teachers can ask their students the following four questions at the end of each class; the answers can assist teachers with future lesson planning (I avoid overly judgmental questions such as “Did you enjoy

the lesson?” as these types of questions are highly subjective):

- What do you think today’s lesson was about?
- What part was easy?
- What part was difficult?
- What changes would you suggest the teacher make?

CONCLUSION

I have focused on the day-to-day lesson planning decisions that face language teachers (both preservice and in-service). Because we all have different styles of teaching, and therefore planning, the suggestions in this chapter are not meant to be prescriptive. Teachers must allow themselves flexibility to plan in their own way, always keeping in mind the yearly, term, and unit plans. As Bailey (1996) points out, a lesson plan is like a road map “which describes where the teacher hopes to go in a lesson, *presumably taking the students along*” (p. 18; emphasis added). It is the latter part of this quote that is important for teachers to remember, because they may need to make “in-flight” changes in response to the actuality of the classroom. As Bailey (1996) correctly points out, “In realizing lesson plans, part of a skilled teacher’s logic in use involves managing such departures [from the original lesson plan] to maximize teaching and learning opportunities” (p. 38). Clearly thought-out lesson plans will more likely maintain the attention of students and increase the likelihood that they will be interested. A clear plan will also maximize time and minimize confusion of what is expected of the students, thus making classroom management easier.

APPENDIX A: LESSON PLAN

Time: 12:00 P.M. to 12:35 P.M.

Subject: English language

Class: Secondary 2 English

Language Focus: Reading

Topic: Sport

(mixed-ability level)

Objectives:

To teach the students how to skim for main idea of the passage – identify key words.

Prior Knowledge:

Students have learned how to locate information by reading and finding the main sentence of each paragraph.

Materials:

1. Reading materials – article from book on Sport
2. Overhead projector/OHTs
3. Whiteboard

Step	Time	Tasks (Teacher)	Tasks (Pupils)	Interaction	Purpose
1	5–10 mins	Opening: Introduction to the topic sport. T activates schema for sport. T asks Ss to help him or her write down as many different kinds of sport on the whiteboard within 3 minutes. T asks Ss to rank their favorite sports in order of importance.	Listen Ss call out the answer to the question as the T writes the answers on the board. T writes the answers.	T ↔ Ss (T = teacher; Ss = students)	Arouse interest. Activate schema for sport.

Step	Time	Tasks (Teacher)	Tasks (Pupils)	Interaction	Purpose
2	5–7 mins	<p>T distributes handout on sports schedule from the newspaper.</p> <p>T asks Ss to read it quickly and answer the true/false questions that follow it within 3 minutes.</p> <p>T goes over the answers and shows Ss how he or she found the answers based on key words in the article.</p>	<p>Ss read the handout and answer the questions.</p> <p>Ss call out their answers to the T.</p> <p>Ss check their answers.</p>	<p>T ↔ Ss</p> <p>Ss ↔ T</p>	Focus attention of Ss on the concept of skimming for general gist with authentic materials.
3	15 mins	<p>T tells Ss that they just practiced skimming to get the general meaning or gist of a passage.</p> <p>T gives another handout on sports from the textbook (<i>New Clue</i>). T asks Ss to read and answer the true/false questions written on the paper within 5 to 7 minutes. T asks Ss for answers and writes them on the board. T explains how key words can give the answers.</p>	<p>Ss read the handout and answer the questions.</p> <p>Ss call out their answers to the T.</p> <p>Ss check their answers.</p>	<p>T ↔ Ss</p> <p>Ss ↔ T (S ↔ S possible also)</p> <p>T ↔ Ss</p>	Getting Ss to read passage quickly to get the overall meaning.
4	5 mins	<p>T summarizes the importance of reading a passage quickly first in order to get the gist.</p> <p>T gives homework of reading the next day's newspaper's front-page story and writing down the gist of the story in 4 sentences.</p> <p>Follow-up: Next lesson: To teach the students to find the main idea of the passage by scanning.</p>	Ss listen.	T ↔ Ss	To remind Ss what they have just done and why – to develop pupil metacognitive awareness.

Key: Interaction: T ↔ Ss means teacher interacts with the whole class.

APPENDIX B: BLOOM'S TAXONOMY OF THINKING PROCESSES

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY OF THINKING PROCESSES (ADAPTATION)			
Level of Taxonomy	Definition	Student Roles	Action Verbs
Knowledge	Recall of specific information	responds absorbs remembers recognizes	tell; list; define; name; identify; state; remember; repeat
Comprehension (understanding)	Understanding of communicated information	explains translates demonstrates interprets	transform; change; restate; describe; explain; review; paraphrase; relate; generalize; infer
Application (using)	Use of rules, concepts, principles, and theories in new situations	solves problems demonstrates uses knowledge constructs	apply; practice; employ; use; demonstrate; illustrate; show; report
Analysis (taking part)	Breaking down information into parts	discusses uncovers lists dissects	analyze; dissect; distinguish; examine; compare; contrast; survey; investigate; separate; categorize; classify; organize
Synthesis (creating new)	Putting together of ideas into a new or unique plan	discusses generalizes relates contrasts	create; invent compose; construct; design; modify; imagine; produce; propose; what if. . .
Evaluation (judging)	Judging the value of materials or ideas on the basis of set standards or criteria	judges disputes forms opinions debates	judge; decide; select; justify; evaluate; critique; debate; verify; recommend; assess

Adapted from Shrum & Glisan (1994)

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CHAPTER 4

Classroom Management

Marilyn Lewis

TEACHERS' CONCERNS

Language teachers are familiar with the intended outcomes of Communicative Language Teaching, namely, for students to use the new language in speech and in writing for a variety of purposes and in a range of contexts. Teachers also have access to many textbooks setting out activities for doing this. What they often struggle with in their own classes is how to manage classroom learning to achieve these ends. The following comments are grouped into three broad categories: motivation, constraints, and the teacher's role.

Some teachers are concerned about *students' motivation*:

Students in our school are learning English because they have to. It makes motivation really difficult for the teacher.

Students don't want to use English in class when they can say the same thing faster in their own language. What do other teachers do if one or two students refuse to speak?

For others, *constraints* are things that teachers believe are stopping them from managing an ideal learning atmosphere:

How can we organize group work when the desks are all fixed to the floor in rows?

Our classes are huge. Whenever I organize tasks, things get messy, such as some students finishing ahead of the others and wasting their time.

How do experienced teachers manage when all the students are at different levels?

We have to achieve examination results. Anything that doesn't lead there is not valued by the school or the parents.

It's hard to access authentic materials for my teaching.

Finally, some comments relate to *new roles for teachers* in language classrooms.

In this school, the tradition is for the teacher to be at the front by the board all the time, but in our teacher-training course they mentioned walking around the room. How could I keep control if I did that?

I was trained to teach in a traditional way and now the government has decided to introduce Communicative Language Teaching. My English isn't good enough to answer students' questions.

Elsewhere in this volume, writers address general principles and approaches to language teaching. This chapter deals with the "how" of classroom management. The concerns just cited are discussed in three sections: motivating students, managing constraints, and managing the teacher's role. The situation will be presented first, followed by some solutions.

MOTIVATING STUDENTS

THE SITUATION

The statement about learning in general, that it "never takes place in a vacuum" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 188), is even more true in the language class. When it comes to creating a classroom climate for language learning, Williams and Burden point to three levels of influence: national and cultural influences on the language being learned, the education system where the language is being learned, and the immediate classroom environment. Influences on the language being learned are already determined, as is the education system. School policy, the textbook, and a national curriculum all influence the way students feel about language learning in general and about learning English in particular. However, teachers do influence the classroom environment by motivating unmotivated students. There are many ways in which students can be "off-task": They fail to take part by sitting in silence, they distract other students by talking off the topic, and they provide "nonlanguage" entertainment. All of these call for teachers' management skills. Even taking into account differences from country to country and class to class, teachers of a range of learners and subjects believe that they can make a difference, as the examples that follow show.

TEACHERS' RESPONSES

In language learning, motivation is more specific than in a content-based subject. The history teacher can motivate students to take an interest in the subject, but the language teacher is looking for more than interest. Language is a skill, and a skill needs to be applied, not just stored in the head or admired at a distance.

Teachers encourage language use through both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Some students have strong intrinsic motivation; they know the benefits of learning a particular

language. Others need to be reminded of where success could lead. For example, in societies where studying literature is an important part of the education system, teachers emphasize the benefits of being able to read English poetry, short stories, and novels in the original. In other contexts, teachers build on the career and commercial benefits to students: Fluent speakers of English are employed as interpreters, they travel abroad on business, and they work in tourism. Reminding students about the jobs waiting for fluent language speakers can be an important part of motivation.

Extrinsic motivation can come through rewards. Teachers supply interesting additional reading materials, they show a video to follow a difficult language task, or they invite guest speakers so that students can use the new language in an authentic way. Occasionally, though, rewards can take over and destroy enjoyment, as van Lier (1996) reports from one of his classes. He had organized a grammar game involving two teams as a means of motivating students, but unfortunately the teams became so competitive that they argued over every point and were quickly diverted from the grammar point.

In monolingual classes teachers report particular difficulty in persuading students to speak English. The following ideas have worked in small and large classes in different countries:

- Role-play, with one student taking the role of a foreigner
- Native-speaking visitors answer questions on specific topics
- Pen friends, by mail or E-mail
- Group presentations of topics students have researched
- Interclass debates
- Speech competitions
- Concerts with plays and singing

Although the ultimate goal is to speak English, in classes where students speak different first languages, it can help motivation to allow limited use of the first language in class for specific purposes. For example, the L1 helps in clarifying a difficult point or planning the organizational part of projects, particularly when the teacher does not speak the languages of all the students.

An ongoing aspect of motivation is dealing with the behavior of particular students. Experienced teachers usually have a scale of responses to off-task behavior, which helps them decide whether to ignore or attend to the problem. Here are three examples of how a teacher might move through stages in managing a particular type of behavior.

CASE 1: THE BACK-ROW DISTRACTOR

The same student always sits at the back and distracts others.

- Use eye contact while continuing to speak.
- Stop mid-sentence and stare until the student stops.
- Talk with the student after class to investigate the cause.

CASE 2: THE NONPARTICIPANTS

Several students are not taking part in the assigned activity.

- Ignore them if they are not distracting others.
- Walk past their desks and ask if there is a problem.
- Ask colleagues how the same students participate in other classes.

CASE 3: THE OVEREXUBERANT STUDENT

In a language class, teachers want students to speak. Sometimes, though, the pleasure of hearing the language in use sours when one outgoing student dominates question time, comment time, and all the rest of the talking time. This calls for tact, because the person is often a good language model for others.

Interrupt with “Thanks for that” and call on someone else to continue.

Remind the student that there will be more talking time soon in groups.

Talk to the student individually later.

In summary, making quick decisions on what to do about a problem depends on answers to questions like the following:

Does the behavior hinder other students’ learning?

Is this just a single occurrence not worth wasting time on?

Is it a whole-class problem or specific to one or two people?

Teachers also know that if large numbers of students are failing to attend to the lesson, there could be a problem with the lesson itself. The task may be too difficult, or it may have continued for too long, or the content may be boring. On the other hand, the problem may not be within the class at all. A forthcoming sports match or even unusual weather can change the mood of a class and signal to the teacher the need for a change of activity.

The suggestions in the rest of this chapter are intended to prevent off-task behavior before it starts.

MANAGING CONSTRAINTS**THE SITUATION**

There are very few contexts in which students learn English only for the purposes of listening and reading, without any need to interact with others in speech or writing. When it comes to giving students opportunities to talk, constraints such as large, multilevel classes with fixed furniture, traditions of learning (“Games are for children. This is an adult class”), an examination-oriented curriculum (“We have to pass exams. Exams are not about group work”), and difficulty in accessing resources all seem to stand in the way of organizing talk. Resources frequently head the list of constraints. Some teachers have no photocopiers or no funds to make copies for the whole class, no tape recorders or video recorders, and their students have no source of interesting reading material, even in a library. The teacher may have a single copy of a useful article, colored photographs relevant to the topic but too small to be seen at the back of a large class, or half a dozen copies of commercial readers at the right level for a class of forty students. Managing with scarce resources is a challenge, but rather than abandoning these great resources, teachers often find ways around the problems.

TEACHERS’ RESPONSES

Reading the many accounts of how other teachers have overcome constraints is one practical way of picking up ideas. For example, the encouraging news about group work despite large numbers and fixed furniture is that it happens in many parts of the world. The journal *English Teaching Forum* is a good source of articles, many of them written about classroom contexts where conditions seem less than ideal. Teachers have described how they organize group

work in large classes with benches fixed to the floor by asking students to turn around and form groups of four with the students sitting in the row behind. Sometimes the group leader scrambles over desks to reach the teacher to discuss progress.

If traditions of learning make students reluctant to join in group work, then the first step is to overcome their preconceptions and “sell” the idea of groups.

- Explain that groups are a chance to speak without the teacher noticing mistakes.
- When students complain about having to listen to all the other students’ bad English when they get into groups, point out that communication involves listening to everyone and making sense whether people speak slowly or fast, formally or informally.
- Make the activities age-appropriate. Avoid the word *games* with older learners.
- Make the purpose of each activity clear beforehand.
- Call for student feedback on group activities. What went well? What could be changed?
- Start with self-selected groupings, so that students are working with people they know or like.
- Show connections between group activities and the rest of the program to overcome the belief that group work is an extra.

In some cultures, students are very anxious about making mistakes in front of others. Oxford (1999) suggests a number of ways of reducing anxiety, including talking about the problem and minimizing conditions that might increase it. In particular, she recommends laughter and music as antidotes to anxiety.

To overcome photocopying constraints, a single article can be photocopied just once and cut up so that each student has one sentence. This becomes the basis of a “divided information” communicative activity. Colored photographs and a limited number of readers can be supplemented by self-access worksheets so that students work through the tasks and materials individually or in pairs on different days. Another resource is the blackboard sketch. Observation in many classrooms in different countries suggests that teachers underestimate their own artwork, whereas students enjoy it. Quick drawing while talking can enliven a dialogue, illustrate word meaning, or prompt student talk.

If the barrier to group work is managing large numbers, the teacher could experiment with different types of group work which call for different management skills: free discussion, projects, and the particular type of group work described as “tasks.” In free-discussion groups, the teacher can use the multilevel nature of the class to advantage by appointing specific roles to avoid problems such as having one student dominating the group and others sitting passively. A chairperson invites people to speak and holds back those who have talked long enough; a timekeeper watches that the group moves on to the various stages of the activity; a reporter takes notes ready for reporting back.

Another type of group work is the project. Projects involve collating material from a number of sources – inanimate and human. The teacher needs to check out availability beforehand with librarians and specialist informants. The informants could be students from other language classes, in which case time-tabling needs to be checked, or other teachers whom students interview between classes. E-mail informants also appreciate hearing from the class teacher before spending time answering questions from students.

The most specific type of small-group activity in the language class is the task. Tasks are described in detail elsewhere in this volume, but the concern here is how to manage

them in large classes. A task requires input data, procedures, goals, and specific roles for teachers and learners, all of which need to be explained to the class. If photocopying facilities are limited, an alternative is to use the board or an overhead transparency. For example, a collection of words which students have to categorize and label can be written up in just a couple of minutes. Some teachers play music as the task input. Procedures can also be listed on the board, or, if they are short enough, the teacher can dictate them.

Whether the group activity is a discussion, a project, or a more specific task, it can have a variety of goals, which students select depending on their level and their interest. In a multilevel class, goals can be graded for different members of the group, according to their language competence, by modifying:

- the topic (more abstract or more applied)
- the language difficulty (two versions of the same text)
- the amount of input
- the graphic support (more or fewer pictures)
- the time taken to finish
- the level of language students are expected to use for the same purpose
- the length of the final “product”
- the amount of support from the teacher and from other students

Because some groups finish before others, teachers often organize an individual activity to follow, and return to a discussion of outcomes when everyone has finished. May (1996, p. 8), in his book *Exam Classes*, suggests:

- different word limits for different groups of students, since it takes the same amount of homework time for individual students to complete different amounts of material.
- providing more able students with different extra tasks rather than just more of the same.

An alternative is not to treat the discussion of goals as a whole-class activity, but to discuss with students group-by-group how their goals have been reached.

As with any other form of organization, group work can be overdone. The teacher's challenge is to decide which class activities can best be done individually, which work well in pairs or groups, and which call for whole-class work. Creative thinking will show teachers on a particular day with a particular class which form of organization to choose for activities such as the following:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • marking homework | • answering students' questions |
| • solving a word puzzle | • listening to tapes |
| • practicing new language | • writing a letter |

MANAGING THE TEACHER'S ROLE

THE SITUATION

The final aspect of classroom management is the role of the teacher. Teachers sometimes fear losing their central classroom role as practiced in the traditional classroom, where students asked questions that teachers could answer. In communicative language classrooms, on the

other hand, they may ask how to say something that the teacher or textbook has not yet introduced or even that the teacher cannot answer.

The teacher's role includes relationships with colleagues. A typical situation is that one teacher is encouraging everyone to talk in pairs, and the talk is so successful that the teacher next door complains. Often it is not a question of actual noise level. Anyone who has taught next to a room where fifty students are chorusing drills loudly will know what noise is. It is more a question of the type of noise that people are accustomed to. When a whole department operates by the same approach, there are fewer misunderstandings.

TEACHERS' RESPONSES

One way of considering a teacher's role is in terms of metaphors. The teacher of a traditional grammar-based class could be described as a tap pouring water into an empty vessel. The teacher has all the knowledge about the new language and the empty vessels have to be filled with the grammar rules and the meaning of words. Then, in situationally based classrooms, where there was an emphasis on memorizing fixed dialogues, the teachers' roles changed. They became conductors of orchestras, bringing in the different players in turn and stopping the orchestra from time to time when someone hit the wrong note. In communicative language classes, there is far more scope for imagination in finding a metaphor: for example, the teacher is a gardener, supplying materials for growth (resources, encouragement) and rearranging the environment (the furniture) for this to happen. Stevick (1996, p. 180) uses the metaphor of a chessboard on which the teacher is "the most powerful single piece." According to this metaphor, the teacher is the most powerful player in classroom dynamics and determines the class structure.

Whatever the metaphor, the teacher has to manage a number of situations, predictable as well as unpredictable. Let's consider two aspects of classroom management: one being the way time is managed, and the other the managing of students' questions. These two are selected because the former is an example of something which can be planned, whereas the latter involves more spontaneous management skills.

One way of managing the large, multilevel class is to plan for the teacher to work with different groups of students at different times during the lesson. An example of this has been reported elsewhere (Lewis, 1998). In summary, four time slots can be used as follows:

Organization	Activity	Purposes
whole class	theme-based building on individual interests	social, language input, fluency
class in two halves, one with self-access materials, the other with the teacher	1. independent tasks 2. direct teaching	language practice, self-assessment preparation for independent work
as above, reversed	1. communicative tasks 2. independent work	focus on meaning follow-up to direct teaching
individual, pairs, or small groups	choice of tasks	one-to-one interaction with teacher and other students

In this model, the teacher has different roles at different times. For example:

- answering or asking questions
- up-front roles or supporting individuals
- language informant or eliciting language
- congratulating or encouraging individuals
- designer of tasks or materials

In detail, the lesson could flow like this: When the class arrives students work together on something that builds group dynamics. For example, the teacher might show graphics (on the overhead projector, for example) of a theme of common interest. Because of the graphics, the topic is accessible to everyone. The language input is oral and comes from both teacher and students. At the second, divided phase, each group builds on the theme that has been introduced. The more advanced group works independently on extra reading, on a traditional exercise, or in the computer laboratory. Meanwhile, the more elementary group is with the teacher, receiving further input on the theme.

At the third phase, this elementary group is ready to work independently, either individually or in pairs, practicing the language that has been introduced, while the advanced group has direct teaching from the teacher. Students in both groups could start by reviewing whatever they were doing at Phase 2 or they could move on to new work. Finally, everyone in the class is working at materials and tasks at their own level. This gives the teacher freedom to move around the room, responding to questions and identifying needs.

A second, and unplanned, aspect of classroom management is dealing with students' spontaneous questions. Teachers have to make quick decisions about whether to answer, postpone, or dismiss a question. As usual in classroom-management decisions, there are many possible responses. Being honest about why a question is not being answered can give students information about the learning process. Saying "Let me look that up so I can check all the details" is a reminder that everyone, teachers as well as students, should make use of reference material. Postponing the question is something teachers do whether or not they need to look it up. They might say, "That's an important question, but if I answer it now I think it will muddle you about the grammar point we are looking at today. Let me come back to that next week." Making a scribbled note of the question as the students watch lets them see that the teacher is taking the question seriously. If a student asks a question about a point the teacher has just explained, the first step is to gauge whether others too need further explanation ("Please put your hands up if you would like to hear the answer to that"). A huge show of hands suggests that more explanation is needed. If only a few hands go up, the teacher can ask those students to listen later when most of the class has started an exercise.

CONCLUSION

Many themes run through current interpretations of Communicative Language Teaching: cooperative learning, authenticity, and task-based syllabuses, to name just three. Underpinning them all is the ability of a teacher to manage students and the environment to make the most of the opportunities for learning and practicing language.

The final word in this chapter goes to Stevick (1996, p. 250), who brings a lifetime of teaching to his six-point summary of what he hopes for in a classroom. He has three hopes for students and three for teachers. He wants students to be involved, to feel comfortable while involved in intellectual activity, and to be listening to one another as well as to the teacher.

He wants teachers to be in general control, to allow and encourage originality in students, and to look “relaxed and matter-of-fact . . . giving information about . . . appropriateness or correctness . . . , rather than criticising or praising.”

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